



Week 1 Assignment

Overview

Welcome to EDLD 5301, an Action Research course. The course has been designed to further address your transformational leadership skills as you engage stakeholders in an effort to make a dramatic difference in the lives of students, staff and the community as you prepare them for life in our ever increasing diverse global village. The professors are committed to helping you learn the skills to conduct action research that will improve your campus, district and larger community throughout your participation in this program, and more importantly, provide the knowledge and skills to continue applied research as part of your lifelong learning and professional development.

As most of you know from your experiences and expertise, there are no programs, and for sure no single product, that can solve all of the conflicts and problems, or even address all of the issues faced everyday in our public schools. You also know that our Lamar program has focused on developing leadership knowledge and skills that we sometimes say need to be in your “leadership toolbox” to help you improve your campus, district, and self. Two of the resources that we selected for your leadership toolbox are the texts for this course, *Leading with passion and knowledge: The Principal as Action Research* by Nancy Fichtman Dana, and *Examining what we do to improve our schools: 8 steps from analysis to action* by Sandra Harris, Stacey Edmonson, and Julie Combs. We will reference these texts as the Dana text and the Harris et al. text. There are many action research education texts, and we have listed some of those, along with other resources, in the Resource section of this course. But we think these books will be excellent sources to help us achieve our larger goal. That goal is expressed succinctly by Michael Fullan in the Foreword to this text. Commenting on the value of action research texts, Fullan states:

Dana has produced a book steeped in passion and strategy that makes action research not an ad hoc project but, rather, a way of life. This project is not a linear one. It is about becoming and continually cultivating what it means to become the best possible leader you can, (Dana, 2009, p. x).

Harris, Edmondson and Combs state:

These (8) action steps provide a framework for examining school improvement that is an ongoing thoughtful evaluation of the work. We believe that when this framework is implemented, schools can be improved, (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2010, p. xvi).

We hope you can sense we feel passionate about this action research initiative and the value to you as a leader! As an overview, we hope to address the following in Week One:

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Understand the nature and purpose of practitioner inquiry and action research.
- 2) Know the benefits of action research for campus or district leaders.
- 3) Be familiar with the steps to develop a blog and share action research progress.

- 4) Understand the importance of using “reflective techniques” to enrich communication on the blog and in monitoring the action research project.

Performance Outcomes:

- 1) Examine definitions of practitioner inquiry, action and applied research and write a definition of action research that is a synthesis of these definitions.
- 2) Review examples of action research in educational settings and provide a written analysis of the benefits of action research.
- 3) Develop a blog focusing on sharing information and insights on the action research project and communicate to other students the needed information for accessing the blog.
- 4) Using the blog, engage in reflective practice and share what is being learned about your action research plan, process, and progress. Submit comments to at least three other class member’s blogs.

Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 1 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	Proficient The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	Needs Improvement The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Why do action research?	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings. (3 Points)	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses. (2 Points)	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the reading to the answer. (1 Point)
Identifying action research in educational settings	Student clearly identifies three examples of action research in educational settings and provides a thorough response describing the benefits of action research. (3 Points)	Student identifies only two examples of action research in educational settings and responds with a brief description of the benefits of action research. (2 Points)	Student incompletely responds to the two activities – either does not identify 3 examples or fails to describe the benefits of action research, but the student does make some response, although incomplete. (1 Point)
Action Research Blog	Student follows directions on building a blog, posts the blog name and URL address; writes at least a 200 word description of what the student has learned about action research; and describes how leaders can use blogs. (3 Points)	Student does two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a blog with name and URL address • Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research • Describes how leaders can use blogs (2 Points)	Student does one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a blog with name and URL address • Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research • Describes how leaders can use blogs (1 Point)
Reflection in Action Research	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings. (3 Points)	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses, or only partially answers one of	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the answer.

		the questions. (2 Points)	(1 Point)
Assignment Mechanics	Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (3 Points)	Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (2 Points)	Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. (1 Point)

Week One Assignment, Part 1 – Why do action research?

Based on the reading from the Dana text, pp. 1 – 15 and Harris et al., pp. 5 - 7, answer the following questions:

1. What is administrative inquiry or action research?
2. How does action research differ from traditional educational research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

Administrative inquiry or action research refers to the systematic approach to collecting and analyzing data, and ultimately solving a problem, as practiced by the insiders of a school or district, typically the principal or leadership team who hold a vested interest in the improvement of the school or district. The topic being researched aligns in some fashion with the shared vision of the campus or district as the vision articulates the goals for the organization, critical knowledge prerequisite to undertaking improvement efforts. A hallmark of action research is that it does not just consist of performing literary research when looking for answers, but also of adding something new to the existing literature, going beyond what is known or adding information or perspectives unique to a specific campus or situation that is not a part of the body of existing research. Action research often results from the process of administrator inquiry, the ongoing process of an educational practitioner wanting to improve themselves and their school or district.

Action research differs from traditional educational research in that it is inquiry performed by practitioners, often by a principal or leadership team on the inside involved in the operation of the school and holding a vested interest in the improvement of the school. As Dana (2009) notes, "Simply stated, practitioner inquiry is defined as systematic, intentional study of one's own professional practice." Traditional educational research is performed by outsiders, professional researchers or scholars, using scientific methods typically under controlled conditions. Traditional research seeks to answer questions and determine courses of action applicable in a general setting or for a general audience, whereas action research concentrates on answering questions and determining a course of action to improve a particular school or the performance of a particular group. Action research allows the application of a case-study approach to answer key questions, or wonderings, encountered in the everyday learning situations in a school or district.

References:

Dana, Nancy F. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin. p. 9.

Week One Assignment, Part 2 – How does action research work in educational settings?

From the Dana text, What are some contexts that are ripe for principal inquiry?, pp. 19 – 25, and the article, Action research: An Effective Instructional Leadership Skill for Future Public School Leaders, answer the following questions:

1. Give at least three examples of action research in educational settings.
2. Describe the benefits of conducting action research.

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

Examples of action research in educational settings include, as documented by Dana (2009) efforts by Florida's Pinellas County District to create meaningful professional development activities for principals that enhance bonding through the creation of interactive inquiry groups. These inquiry groups apply action research to study and reflect upon aspects of their own practice, and then regularly share their findings with the larger group. The bonds formed by this activity are similar to those formed by university students, facilitating the formation of professional learning communities.

Speaking of professional learning communities (PLCs), Dana (2009) provides another example of action research in an educational setting; a principal-led inquiry by a PLC on what actions faculty should undertake to improve reading achievement for their lowest-quartile students. This inquiry has all the hallmarks of action research, as it features a high-level, overarching question or "wondering" which can be further broken down into open-ended subquestions, such as the relationship between mentoring and improving the AYP of the targeted students, or the relationship between afterschool program participation and improvement of the AYP of the targeted students. These subquestions allow specific inquiry to be performed in manageable stages so as not to be as overwhelming in nature as trying to directly answer the grander, overarching question.

An example of action research proposed by Lamar EDLD 5301 student Lauri Arnold seeks to determine what the Computer Networking and Troubleshooting Technology program at the Lamar Institute of Technology can do to engage today's 18 to 20 year old college students. This overarching question leads naturally to several salient sub-questions, including "How can the existing technology be better used to enhance learning?", "What rules or policies prevent learning in the student's native style?" and "What technology tools do students normally use that they do not have access to while on campus?" A literature review, combined with results from student and faculty surveys and reflection upon the status quo and the vision of the university would support action towards improvement while providing a great case-study, potentially applicable to other universities in a similar situation.

A final example of action research in education highlighted by Dana (2009) is applicable to leadership teams. It is critical for leadership teams to learn as they lead their organization as a team (not as disparate individuals), and if the team is unable to learn, then the organization is unable to learn. By applying action research principals during leadership team meetings to promote inquiry and engage all team members in the inquiry process, inquiry, reflection and self-reflection become regular practice for all the administrators. According to Ringler (2007), "As school leaders, it is important to understand the action research process as an effective tool for improving teaching and learning."

One of the benefits of conducting action research is that as the research is performed by practicing educators to analyze some component of their own learning environment, it results in positive change by improving the way the educator performs in and interacts with

that learning environment. Action research ingrains the practice of inquiry and reflection essential to continuous improvement; questioning the status quo and reflecting upon what we know and what we don't know helps focus improvement initiatives while fostering a habit of continuous learning. The inquiry and reflection that is a hallmark of action research transforms the administrator from being just a passive observer or researcher, gathering and disseminating information, into an active agent of change who is actually applying feedback and information in a sustained improvement process. Action research allows anyone to become a star player on their leadership team by taking known information and research, adding their unique situational variables, reflection and input and applying the process to synergistically create new and innovative solutions, improving instruction for all.

References:

Dana, Nancy F. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin. p. 19-25.

Ringler, Marjorie C. (2007). Action Research an Effective Instructional Leadership Skill for Future Public School Leaders. *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, 4(1), 27-37.

Week One Assignment, Part 3 – Building a Blog on Action Research*

Some of you may have built a blog in EDLD 5352, or in another context. We wish to thank Dr. Kay Abernathy, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Ed Tech Leadership Master's at Lamar, for helping us to learn to build blogs. In this course, we are requiring you to build a blog where you can share your action research project and progress, as well as learn from reading others' blogs on action research. To accomplish building a blog, we ask that you:

- Access the video, "Blogs in Plain English" by entering the following address in your web address bar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN2I1pWXjXI>
- View "Blogs in Plain English" as preparation for this assignment.
- Enter the following address in your web address bar: www.blogger.com.
- Read the information about the site.
- Click "Create a Blog." Complete the information required to use the site, including the selection of a username and password. (If you already have a Google account, you can enter your username and password at the top of the home page.) Check the box to accept the terms of service, and click "Continue" to move to the next step.
- After creating your blog account, click "Name Blog."
- Select a title for the blog (example: Jo Ann's Action Research Journeys or something a little more creative) and a blog address URL (example: <http://yourname.blogspot.com>). Click "Continue" to move to the next step, "Choose a Template."
- Choose a template for your blog, then click "Continue."
- When the "Your Blog Has Been Created" screen appears, click "Start Blogging."
- On the screen provided, write a description of what you have learned about action research and how you might be able to use it. This description should be at least 200 words.
- Next write an analysis of how educational leaders might use blogs – 25 words or more are recommended.
- Also, read your Dana text, Data Collection Strategy 7: Reflective Journals and/or Blogs, pp. 87 – 89
- ***Note on Blog Sharing:** The Dana text also discusses the power of sharing action research projects and progress on pages 149 – 151, and offers the following link to educational blogs: <http://supportblogging.com/Links+to+School+Bloggers>
- Be sure to post your blog information below:

Your Blog's Name	Your Blog's URL
Educating for Our Future: Benefits of Action Research	http://educatingforourfuture.blogspot.com/2010/07/benefits-of-action-research.html
<i>As requested, I posted comments to two classmate's blogs:</i>	

Michael C. Warren <http://michaelcwarren.net/> and Carrie Wilson
<http://cwilsonactionresearch.blogspot.com/2010/07/question-what-have-i-learned-about.html#comments>

Screen shots of comment postings below

Michael C. Warren

Technology and Education

EDLD 5301 Week 1 – Action Research Project

[without comments](#)

Action research or administrator inquiry is a systematic approach to reviewing data, recognizing a problem, implementing a change based on research, and reflecting on the change that has been made. It is a way for those affected by the problem to be involved and responsible in the changes that are implemented. While it may be easy to see a problem and buy a solution it is harder and more involved to be part of the researching and implementing the solution. By being part of the research you take responsibility on the implementation, you interact with those who are affected and you bond with those who are involved. The problem and solution becomes part of you.

At Maypearl ISD we have been hosting and running our own web site for the past 3 years. While a simplistic HTML template based site, it has grown to over 300 pages and consists of all forms of media. This year our Internet Service Provider stated they would no longer provide e-mail or web hosting, but only provide Internet connection services. This has placed us in a bind in which we have had to research new forms of hosting for our web page and e-mail. Using Action research we will work to migrate from our current hosting service to an improved solution to provide additional learning tools for our district.

Written by admin

July 14th, 2010 at 4:58 pm

Posted in [EDLD 5301 Action Research](#)

« [May Field Based Activity Reflection](#)
[EDLD 5301 Week 1 – Blog Usage](#) »

Leave a Reply


Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Michael, your idea to use action research to find a solution for your web site hosting/email dilemma is a great application of practitioner-based inquiry. As you say, action research is a systematic process, and by using your blog to report your findings and progress, and solicit input, your school stands to reap the rewards action research promises. Targeting your efforts on instructional technology through the school website will benefit your students, teachers and the community as you work to improve communication with all stakeholders. A very worthy project!

Question: What have I learned about action research and how do I plan to use it?



I have learned that action research is a professional behavior exhibited by actively involved and concerned principals. Administrator inquiry becomes a powerful vehicle for learning and school improvement (Dana, 2009).


If I were to become an administrator (for reasons I will not become an administrator please see page 1 in Dana, 2009 beginning with For example in sentence 3 and continue reading to the bottom of that paragraph, thank you), I would use action research to solve big problems on my campus. I would be the queen of data collection via anonymous surveys. I would hone in on the issues that are plaguing my school and use my resources wisely to fix them. I would rely on the experts I have hired into ancillary leadership roles and seek their professional opinions and advice. I would be a principal in charge of my own learning (Dana, 2009). I would be tuned-in to the health of my school much like I'm tuned-in my own personal health. (Harris, Edmonson, & Combs, 2010). In the way that I would require my teachers to work together in professional learning communities, I too would seek a principal professional learning community so as to not fall into a pit of isolation, as a principal it's easy to do (Dana, 2009). I would strive to be proactive to problems and not reactive. I would multitask to the best of my ability, as any good administrator would do.

I would...NOT be above learning how to become a better principal each and everyday!

These are my original thoughts (and citations),
-Carrie


Dana, N. F. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin; AASA.

Harris, S., Edmonson, S., & Combs, J. (2010). *Examining What We Do To Improve Our Schools: 8 Steps From Analysis to Action*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Posted by Carrie Wilson at 1:35 PM 


Labels: [action research](#), [administrator inquiry](#)

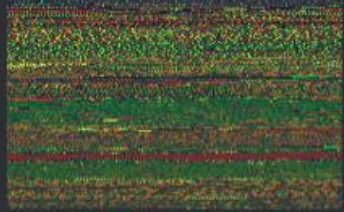
1 comments:



EdTechMan said...


Carrie, your reference to principals "falling into a pit of isolation" is very pertinent. Even in large districts, it is easy for a principal to develop tunnel vision and feel their school and its problems are so unique that no one else can help them. A great benefit to action research, as you point out, is solving the "big problems" as part of a professional learning community working together as co-practitioners, systematically inquiring into relevant research that can be applied to effect change and improve the school.

July 17, 2010 5:25 PM 



MySpace-Countdowns

About Me



Carrie Wilson
Graduate student at Lamar University Educational Technology Leadership
Projected graduation date: December 2010
[View my complete profile](#)

Blog Archive

07/11 - 07/18 (2)

Week One Assignment, Part 4 Reflection in Action

From the Dana text, please read, How do I find time to engage in inquiry as a principal?, pp. 15 – 19, and from your EDLD 5311 text, *School leadership internship*, 2nd edition, read Reflection in Action, pp. 104 – 107, and answer the following:

Describe why reflection is an important skill in leadership. Why is reflection an important aspect of action research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

Reflection is an important skill in leadership as it is a critical component of analysis; just as you cannot move to action without conducting analysis; you cannot conduct analysis without reflecting upon what has transpired and what we know. We must be sure to reflect upon both what we know and especially what we do not know in order to internalize knowledge, both as leaders and as a leadership team. After we have analyzed data and developed a deeper understanding of our situation, it is important for leaders to engage in self reflection to fully comprehend the nature of the current situation and what events, actions and inactions contributed to the status quo.

Reflection is an important aspect of action research because action research is performed by practitioners immersed in the process of change and improvement, not by outside observers, scholars or professional researchers. As practitioners, we must not only examine the knowns (what has been done and why these things were done) just as outside researchers would, but we must particularly reflect upon the unknowns, what we do not know. As Harris, Edmonson and Combs remind us, "Reflection allows one to see what is unknown so that one can begin to understand, which ultimately informs change." Because we cannot see what we do not know, reflection is a critical tool to examine who we are as practitioners, what our goals and expectations are, what biases we may have, and most importantly, why we do what we do. Practitioner inquiry is not as controlled and clinical in nature as traditional research performed by outsiders, and as we are immersed in the situation we are trying to improve through the action research process, it is critical to recognize how our unknown biases and expectations, and the unknown biases and expectations of those on our team, are impacting both our inquiry and our actions.

References:

Harris, Sandra; Edmonson, Stacy; & Combs, Julie (2010). *Examining What We Do to Improve Our Schools: 8 Steps from Analysis to Action*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. p. 49.